

Central Intelligence Agency



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19 September 1986

**China-USSR: Beijing's Response to Gorbachev's Overtures** 

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**Summary**

Beijing will probably seize the opportunity presented by Gorbachev's speech in Vladivostok outlining Soviet overtures to China to increase its room for maneuver in the strategic triangle, reduce the Soviet threat to China, and sow concern in Hanoi about the reliability of Soviet support.

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**Gorbachev's speech of 28 July apparently has not altered Beijing's perception that the USSR poses the principal threat to China and the region.**

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This memorandum was prepared by  Office of East Asian Analysis. Information available as of 19 September 1986 was used in its preparation. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, International Security Branch, China Division, OEA

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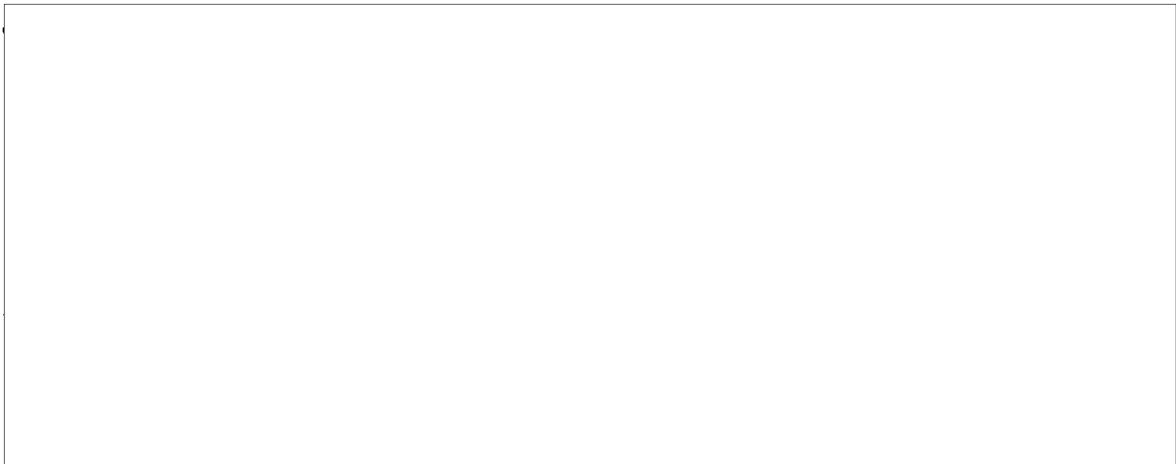
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- While welcoming the speech for its "positive elements," Chinese leaders point out that its proposals do not remove what Beijing calls the "three obstacles" to full normalization of Sino-Soviet relations: Cambodia, Afghanistan, and the Soviet military buildup on China's northern border.
- By publicly calling for Soviet concessions on Cambodia--an area Gorbachev carefully avoided--Beijing has in our judgment purposely placed a constraint on how far it can go with Moscow. [REDACTED]

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**Deng appears to see the USSR as unable to reform its economy, losing ground in its competition with the United States, and thus in a weakened position to deal with China. Deng likely will seek to use Gorbachev's initiative to press the Soviets hard for significant concessions while giving away nothing that would jeopardize China's ties with the United States.**

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[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] **at the ninth round of bilateral talks in October China may demand that Moscow:**

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- Withdraw the majority of Soviet troops from Mongolia.
- Pull back troops from the Sino-Soviet border.
- Reduce SS-20 deployments in the Soviet Far East.
- Curtail reconnaissance flights against China through North Korean airspace.
- Relinquish Chimnaya/Heixiazi Island across from Khabarovsk. [REDACTED]

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**Significant Soviet concessions in at least one of these areas could induce China to make one or more of the following gestures:**

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- Revive Sino-Soviet border talks.
- Agree to confidence-building gestures along its northern border.
- Set dates for the exchange of foreign ministerial visits.
- Expand Soviet access to senior Chinese leaders.
- Increase working-level contacts. [REDACTED]

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**Several Chinese officials have reassured the United States of China's continued Western orientation, but we expect Beijing to try to play on United States concern to extract concessions from the United States on Taiwan.**

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**Beijing, however, still genuinely distrusts Moscow, desires Western technology, trade, investment, and military relations, and is concerned about the sensitivities of such regional friends as Thailand and Pakistan. These considerations almost certainly will keep the Chinese from significantly improving relations with Moscow for some time to come.**

- Sino-Soviet trade is growing but will continue to constitute less than 5 percent of each country's total trade. We expect it to inhibit US sales to China in only a few areas, such as timber, fertilizers, coal, and some industrial chemicals. [REDACTED]

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**Gorbachev's Proposals**

In his speech given in Vladivostok on 28 July, Gorbachev made the following new proposals concerning China:

- The Soviet Union will withdraw six regiments from Afghanistan by year's end.
- Moscow is ready to discuss "concrete steps" to reduce land forces along the Sino-Soviet border.
- Soviet and Mongolian leaders are examining the removal of a "substantial part" of what we believe to be approximately 60,000 Soviet troops in Mongolia.
- The Soviet Union and China could cooperate in space exploration.

Gorbachev once again:

- Proposed bilateral discussions "any time, and at any level" on improving relations.
- Suggested the official boundary on the Amur River might pass along the main shipping channel instead of the Chinese bank.

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- Resurrected his call last year for a Helsinki-style Asian security conference.
- Reiterated Soviet willingness to establish a rail link between Soviet Kazakhstan and Chinese Xinjiang.
- Endorsed already-begun bilateral negotiations to jointly develop the Amur River Basin.

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